643 so that he may keep separate the interests of his house and those of the country.

Nomination of the Fama. The title of Fama remains in the family around which the canton has grown. Power passes from older to younger brother until a generation dies out, then goes to the oldest brother in the next generation, for, as a general rule, the living male nearest to the original ancestor should reign. However, the history of Ségou shows us how certain Fama have tried to establish direct succession from themselves to their eldest son. But the 643 accession of the Fama is submitted to the ratification of a council 645 of notables which includes the following persons.

a. The young chiefs, male descendants in the first degree of the Fama; they are directed by the eldest among them, with the second eldest being his syere or heir presumptive.

b. The old masters who are the Fama's brothers.

c. Their sons and all circumcised fathers of families.

643 Power of the Fama. The power of the Fama is founded on custom and religion. He is the earthly representative of all the ancestors; he is the radiating center which gives life to all the society; he is the Word of his people. He decides the crops, regulates commerce, concludes alliances, declares wars, renders justice, imposes taxes. He is the guardian of custom and the legislator of new laws, the organizer of the time and space he governs. His word is very powerful and dangerous; his decisions are whispered in the [326] ear of a blacksmith, who repeats them aloud to the assembly. His very glance makes his subjects tremble, and they approach him grovelling, forehead in the dust. No quarrel may break out in his presence, no violence committed; his power over men and goods is [645 absolute. Nevertheless, all his decisions are taken after consultation 646] with the notables and with the assembly of delegates from each village. If one of the members of the assembly disagrees with the Fama about a point of law, he gets up and leaves the meeting without saying anything, marking his disapprobation in this manner. When a law is [695] passed by all the assembly, each member swears an oath, on the tomb of an ancestor or the altar of the komo [one of the mens' societies], in behalf of himself and his descendants.